

Mayor Charles "Skip" Lee called the study session to order at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, March 30, 2015. Roll call. Present: Aldermen Retha Elston, Joe Martin, and John Stauter. Absent: Aldermen Barry Cox, Chris Schuchard, and Lou Sotelo.

Also present were City Manager Scott Shumard, City Management Intern Kevin Smith, Director of Financial Services Cindy Von Holten, Police Chief Ron Potthoff, Deputy Fire Chief Mike Dettman, and City Clerk Marie Rombouts.

Mayor Lee introduced Jerry Gabris and Peter Burchard, facilitators for strategic planning and services. Gabris is a professor with Northern Illinois University and Burchard is a former City Manager.

Gabris explained the reason and background for strategic planning. We live in a complicated world that is changing through population, funding, and economic development. It behooves the City to plan for more than one year. He and Burchard will gather statistical information about the community and ideas from staff, review the issues and give a five year window to implement. Communities usually find more agreement than not of their future ideals. The plan will not solve the issues but provide a path of where to go and a discipline process with five to six priorities. Gabris and Burchard provide facilitation with material coming from Council, staff, and community.

Burchard outlined four components of the plan: 1) commitment to the future, 2) analysis of the community, 3) strategic items, and 4) ground game.

Alderman Martin noted Gabris and Burchard have worked with more than 100 communities. Martin asked how many were small, rural communities? Gabris stated that suburbs view their community as small and autonomous. Burchard reassured that the plan is about Sterling with no presumption of being a suburb. Sterling is unique and special.

Manager Shumard explained they will be facilitating the process and fishing ideas from the Council and businesses. They are neutral.

Burchard explained they help build the ground game from the vision given by the community.

Alderman Stauter stated that he has been through strategic planning before and expressed concern that nothing is done with the plan after it is prepared. The City has a few plans in place now like the Riverfront Plan and Comprehensive Plan, so how does this work with existing plans? Gabris stated this plan will coordinate with current plans.

It is important to pursue the strategic plan. It helps a community “see the forest through the trees.”

Burchard suggested to make the goals public and make the implementation a part of the Manger’s performance review. To ensure implementation, you can do quarterly written reports. The Plan is like New Year Resolutions that need to be reviewed and implemented on a regular basis.

Alderman Elston asked about follow-up. Gabris suggested reviewing annually for ten years.

Mayor Lee asked where the largest failure rate occurs. Gabris stated conflict amongst the Council leads to the largest failures. Burchard believes failures occur because of lack of leadership, unexpected turns, and caught up in today with no purpose for the future. Gabris stated the community ownership creates more legitimacy.

Raw data will be provided to the Council with top picks. Gabris and Burchard suggest a retreat, maybe six hours, to review data and prioritize.

Manager Shumard stated the data will create conversation and help set priorities.

Alderman Stauter asked how this will work new Aldermen are seated. Gabris advised the Council to think ahead. Burchard explained it would be the responsibility of current members to get new members to buy into the plan and tweak it as necessary.

Mayor Lee thanked Gabris and Burchard for their presentation.

Manager Shumard began discussion on the last of the budget funds – sewer and solid waste.

The Hey’s Lift station project came in under budget. There were no emergency sewer line replacements. The cost of chemicals was down.

\$80,000 is estimated for the sewer extension on Fifth and Sixth Avenues, south of Lynn Boulevard. The Park District is working on safe routes to school on Sixth Avenue south of Lynn Boulevard. This stretch of Sixth Avenue needs new sanitary sewer, street, curb, gutter, and sidewalks. It is scheduled for 2016.

Proposed increase on the sewer bill is 9 cents on usage rates for 2015-16.

In Solid Waste we have three more years on the current garbage contract. The increase will be from \$15.30 to \$15.60.

Director Von Holten reported that since going full-time last May, Michelle has collected \$81,613 on inactive accounts. She has pursued landlords. Approximately \$30,000 is expected from the IDROP program.

Von Holten presented accounts to be written off. It has not been done for a couple years. The \$26,000 presented is far less than the \$50,000 that was written off when the water company was doing the billing. A lot of billing problems have been cleared up since the City resumed the billing.

Mayor Lee called Michelle a bulldog that is compassionate when she is collecting past debts.

Von Holten asked if the Council prefers to have a committee review the write-offs or just present them at Council meetings. The Council agreed to present directly to them.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.

Marie Rombouts  
City Clerk